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SECOND BLASTS BOOK THAT MENTIONS HIM
By JOAN MOWER
WASHINGTON

P Richard V. Secord recently wrote a pointed letter to a book publisher, contending the author of a best-seller about convicted ex- CIA agent Edwin P. Wilson has tried to boost sales by linking that case to the Iran-Contra affair.

Secord, a retired Air Force major general, is a key figure in Iran-Contra investigations.

"This is a terribly crass way of promoting a book," Secord wrote on March 2 to Gerald E. Hollingsworth, general counsel at Random House Inc., publisher of Peter Maas' book entitled "Manhunt." Secord is mentioned frequently in the book, which describes the exploits of Wilson, a former CIA official convicted of selling explosives to Libya. Secord and Wilson knew each other.

"The purpose of this letter is to set forth specifically the erroneous, libelous and damaging statements relating to me in the book "Manhunt," Secord wrote. The Associated Press obtained a copy of the letter.

Secord, who has refused to talk with either federal investigators or reporters since details of the Iran-Contra case began emerging about four months ago, said he was "prepared to release this letter to the media" if his demands were not met.

He sought assurances that there would be no "further circulation or exploitation of 'Manhunt' in its present form." Maas denied there were any inaccuracies in the book, which was published last year. "I'm not changing a word," he said, adding that he tried in vain to interview Secord while researching the book. He called the letter "quite bizarre." Neither Secord nor his attorney, Thomas C. Green, returned telephone calls.

In his letter, Secord wrote: "I believe that Maas and his publishers are attempting to exploit the publicity surrounding the so-called Iran/Contra affair by suggesting that incidents described in 'Manhunt' are related in some fashion to the current investigation." Secord's business partner, Albert Hakim, is mentioned in "Manhunt," as is former CIA official Thomas Clines. A

Investigators believe that Hakim may have controlled bank accounts linked to the Iran arms sales, and Clines is thought to have played a role in procuring weapons for the Contras.

One legal expert said it was unlikely the letter would jeopardize Secord's Fifth Amendment constitutional protection, which the retired general has cited in remaining silent before congressional committees investigating the sale of weapons to Iran and the possible diversion of profits to the Contra rebels fighting Nicaragua's government.

Joe Grano, a law professor at Wayne State University in Detroit, Mich., said Secord apparently would waive his rights only by answering questions before a public body.

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Secord also said in his letter:

He retired from the Air Force, rather than "quietly resigned," as Maas wrote. "My retirement ceremony was not quiet, and it was attended by a large number of friends and colleagues," Secord wrote, adding that Defense Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger was present.

He never flew missions "for the CIA at any time in Laos or elsewhere." Maas described him as "back from flying missions during the CIA's secret Laotian war." Secord, a pilot, served in Laos in the 1960s when the CIA waged a covert war against the North Vietnamese, according to William H. Sullivan, the former U.S. ambassador to Laos.

It was an "ugly and incredibly damaging accusation" to say that Secord was part of a group that set up a shipping company to make millions from the transportation of U.S. weapons to Egypt. Maas wrote that Wilson had told a woman he was in such a shipping deal with Clines, Secord and two other men. Clines later was fined for his role in the company, which was accused of submitting fraudulent bills to the Pentagon. Secord never was charged with any violation.